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During teacher-administered tryouts of an instructional program, staff observations of classroom lessons are an important data source for making later revisions. However, such data are often unavailable when needed because of a lack of systematic procedures for data collection and documentation. This paper suggests certain procedures for reporting classroom observation of a program lesson. These procedures are illustrated in the observation of two laboratory programs, "Composition Skills" and "Drama and Public Speaking." (Author)

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OBSERVATION PROCEDURES FOR CLASSROOM TRYOUT OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND PROCEDURES

Fred C. Niedermeyer

During teacher-administered tryouts of an instructional program, staff observations of classroom lessons are an important data source for later formulation of revisions. However, these data are often unavailable when needed because of a lack of systematic procedures for collection and reporting. This paper suggests certain procedures for reporting classroom observation of a program lesson. These procedures are illustrated in the observation of two Laboratory programs: Composition Skills and Drama and Public Speaking.

Observation Reporting Forms

Figure 1 is a sample observation reporting form currently being used in the Composition Skills Program. Staff observers complete the form following each observation. Copies of the report are distributed to the Activity Head and each staff member and are kept in loose-leaf notebooks.

The heading of the form in Figure 1 contains various information categories useful to those reviewing the observation report. In addition to the lesson number, it includes a brief description of the lesson. This helps the reader recall the specific lesson without having to rummage through his files to find the actual lesson. Indications of the size and level of the group of children involved in the lesson and the length of the lesson are useful for later comparisons and analyses.

The body of the observation report is divided into two sections: (1) observations and (2) inferences and implications. The observation section should be an objective description of what was seen and heard

during the lesson. If it is well-written, it should allow the reader to make valid decisions about the extent to which recommended program procedures were followed during the lesson.

The latter section contains inferences about the lesson. Useful inferences will have implication for confirming the adequacy of program materials and procedures or for suggesting new ones. The writer should be free to suggest program revisions at this point, rather than wait until later. Generally the inferences should deal with the following areas:

- teacher implementation of suggested procedures
- pupil problems in responding to teacher or materials
- extent to which children seemed to enjoy the lesson
- teacher comments and apparent attitude about the lesson or the program.

It is possible for the writer to code the comments in this section as being related to teacher procedures, materials, or other aspects of the lesson. This is useful later when going through a large number of observation reports to pull out problems and suggestions for each of these areas.

Sample Reports

Figures 2, 3 and 4 are sample observation reports from current tryouts. The first two are from the Composition Skills Program, and the third one is from the Drama and Public Speaking Program. The writers of these reports generally did a good job of separating observations from inferences (although some prior training [and feedback] on this skill may be required initially).

After several observation reports have been submitted, it is useful to consolidate certain types of problems and revision suggestions. Figure 4 is a listing of inferences and implications across several reports which related to the handwriting exercises used in Level 1 (kindergarten) of the Composition Skills Program.

Figure 1

Sample Observation Reporting Form
(Reduced)

PROGRAM: Level 1 Composition Skills.....Spring, 1972, Tryout	
DATE:	UNIT AND LESSON NO.:
SCHOOL:	LESSON DESCRIPTION:
TEACHER:	SIZE AND LEVEL OF GROUP:
OBSERVER:	TIME SPAN:

OBSERVATION

INFERENCES AND IMPLICATIONS
(Related to Teacher Procedures--TP, Materials--M, Other--O)

Figure 2

Sample Report From Level 1 of Composition Skills Program

PROGRAM:	FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION SKILLS (KINDERGARTEN)...SPRING, 1972, Tryout		
DATE:	2/23/72	UNIT AND LESSON NO.:	Unit 1, Lesson 17
SCHOOL:	XXXX	LESSON DESCRIPTION:	Letter Formation Practice
TEACHER:	XXXX	SIZE AND LEVEL OF GROUP:	Entire Class (28) average
OBSERVER:	XXXX	TIME SPAN:	11:45-12:10 (about 6 children continued while the others joined the teacher in a circle)

OBSERVATION

The lesson is introduced as having two letters: "E's" and "W's." The teacher goes over the stroke sequences with all the children orally. As the teacher directs, the children "write" the letters in the sky, using their fingers. The teacher then uses an extra lesson sheet to write the letters for the children as they watch. The teacher says that when they are done, the children can do the pictures on each side of the lesson.

The children are instructed to put their names on their papers. "The 'W' is an upside-down 'M', so don't make your 'W' upside-down. Also, don't erase...just go on." The children work independently while the teacher goes around the room examining the letters, praising children who write good ones. She manually assists one girl whose "W's" look like chicken tracks (VV). Most of the children are having trouble forming the "W" correctly.

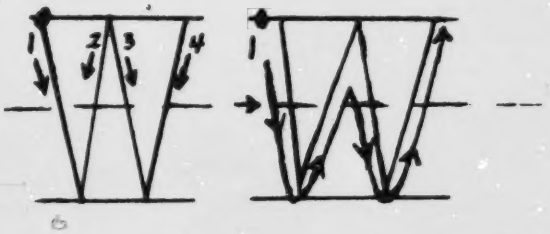
INFERENCES AND IMPLICATIONS
(Related to Teacher Procedures--TP, Material--M, Other--O)

O. The children worked extremely well on their own and enjoyed writing the letters.

O. The teacher referred to the lesson as having two letters: "E's" and "W's." Should she have said four letters: "E," "e," "W," and "w?"

O. The teacher said some of the children find letter formation impossible. The others (approximately 90%) enjoy it.

M. The children all had trouble with the "W." The teacher suggested that if the children did not have to lift their pencils for the stroke sequence, they could write the "W" much easier.



(Figure 2 continued)

TP. Since the teacher gave the children no guidance regarding the second line of letters to be written without starting dots, the letters in that second line became scrambled with too many bunched up letters. The SWRL Teacher Procedures do not mention any guidance for that second line.

Figure 3

Sample Report From Level 2 of the Composition Skills Program

PROGRAM:	SECOND YEAR COMPOSITION SKILLS (FIRST GRADE)...SPRING, 1972, Tryout		
DATE:	2/22/72	UNIT AND LESSON:	Story 26 ("The Fog") Story 10 ("Fun in the Sun")
SCHOOL:	XXXX	LESSON DESCRIPTION:	Word Selection
TEACHER:	XXXX	SIZE AND LEVEL OF GROUP:	(15) - above average (9) - below average
OBSERVER:	XXXX	TIME SPAN:	9:40-10:10 (still going on when I left)

OBSERVATION

All the children were gathered around the teacher, although two different lessons would be given. Story 26 ("The Fog") was presented to the class, and the teacher noted that this lesson didn't have any pictures. Therefore, after finishing the lesson, the children could draw their own pictures. Since the advanced group knew what to do, the teacher sent them to their seats with Story 26, asking them to work quietly.

The lower group remained to hear instructions for Story 10 ("Fun in the Sun"). The teacher whispered to me that this group has difficulty reading, and some of the children are on medication. Then the teacher had the children look at the picture on Page 1 and name the characters. She went through each sentence on Page 1, asking the children whether they would choose the top word or the bottom word and why. After reading the first sentence, she had different children read the rest on the front of the lesson. As the children went back to their seats, the teacher reminded them to look at the pictures since they help when doing the exercise. When they finished, the children could either color the pictures or come to the teacher and talk about the exercise. At this point, the teacher reminded the high group that they could choose several words from the lists in Story 26. (The low group did both sides of Story 10 at their seats.)

When the children finished their lessons, they came to the teacher who either marked errors in red and had the child correct the mistakes at his seat, or wrote "Very Good" if the lesson was correctly done. The teacher noted to those children doing Story 26 that it was fun to be able to choose their own words and make their own stories.

INFERENCES AND IMPLICATIONS
(Related to Teacher Procedures--TP, Material--M, Other--O)

TP. The teacher would like to have more than two groups, but she finds it impossible because of the time element. She sees no way to have three or four groups at three or four different levels, although the class

(Figure 3 continued)

should be arranged in that manner. (The class has children in Book 6 all the way down to Book 1 in the Reading Program, with some children barely able to get through Book 1.)

M. In the sealed stack of Story 26, several Story 27 lessons were found.

Th. The way the teacher arranged the two groups was very clever. Since Story 10 was shorter than Story 26, the teacher helped the Story 10 children correct their papers and then let them color the pictures. Meanwhile, the Story 26 children finished their longer lesson and then went to the teacher for corrections. The timing seemed perfect, as all the children were busy and then finishing up at the same time.

Figure 4

Sample Report From Level 3 of Drama and Public Speaking Program

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DRAMA & PUBLIC SPEAKING PROGRAM

Classroom Visitation

GRADE LEVEL:	2	OBSERVER:	XXXX
DATE:	March 9, 1972	SIZE OF GROUP:	Entire Class (approx. 30)
SCHOOL:	XXXX	TIME SPAN:	20 min.
TEACHER:	XXXX		

LESSON NO. AND DESCRIPTION: Lesson 10 -- The children practice saying first a single word and then script lines using many different tones of voice.

OBSERVATIONS

The teacher had all pupils sitting at their tables, a list of the emotion-words to be used written on the blackboard. She asked everyone to say the word "goodbye" using one of these (on the list) tones of voice. She selected volunteers (by raised hands) to go up before the class and say the word, having the class guess which emotion-word he was using. The volunteer would select children to guess his emotion-word. Most of the time the class was able to guess, but when they failed to, the teacher would ask the volunteer what his emotion was. Then, she would suggest and have the class suggest ways he could portray it. Then, the child would repeat his performance.

The teacher kept the pace very rapid, saying: "Hurry up now. Let's keep it moving." The children chose diversified emotions, rarely doing the same one in a row. If the children did have a "string" of performances of the same emotion, the teacher would ask the class to skip that one for awhile. If the children had difficulty in portraying an emotion (e.g., afraid) she would have several performers act as models, discussing what they could do to look "afraid," Then, she would have the performers who had trouble with "afraid" do it again. The teacher praised the good performances often.

INFERENCES and IMPLICATIONS

1. The teacher was very enthusiastic, and the rapid pace seemed to aid the lesson a good deal (she was like a good football coach). The rapid pacing kept the children from getting bored, since they are very quick learners.

(Figure 4 continued)

2. The children seemed to enjoy the lesson very much. Everyone volunteered and no one seemed embarrassed if they made mistakes.

3. The teacher had gone over in detail the meanings of all the emotions (e.g., embarrassed, bored, confused) in a previous lesson and had discussed some stereotypic ways of portraying them. The children were able to elaborate on these and come up with some very imaginative gestures and facial expressions.

4. The children did follow the example of the better performers. Especially if the better performer did something amusing.

Figure 5

Summary of Materials-related Inferences and Implications
from Level 1 of Composition Skills

SPRING, 1972
COMPOSITION SKILLS PROGRAM

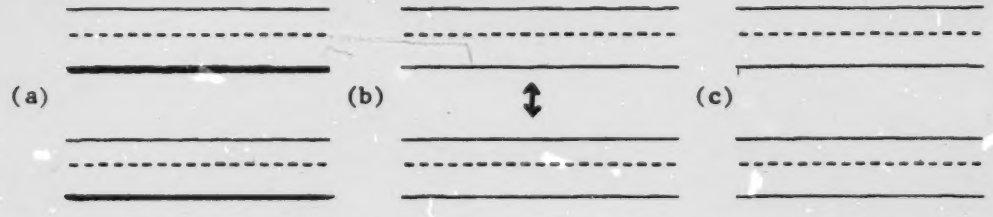
Observation in the Schools
Materials-Related Comments

Kindergarten

1. The 20 minutes allotted for each lesson is often not enough time to complete the entire exercise. Perhaps the exercise should consist of one letter (capital and lowercase) with space for continuation of that letter on the back of the exercise. Therefore, children who complete the front of the lesson can continue to practice on the back.

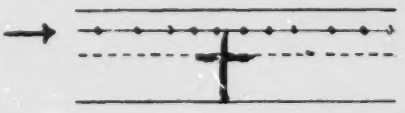
2. The dot on the small "i" is the same size as the starting dot and therefore confuses the children. They not only tend to start at the wrong place, but some children also made large circles for the dot rather than just a small dot.

3. Going from one guideline now to the next is a problem for the children. Several suggestions have been made to remedy the situation:
(a) bottom lines of the guidelines should be darker than the others;
(b) there should be a larger distance between each guideline set;
(c) spaces between the guideline sets should be shaded and then eventually faded.



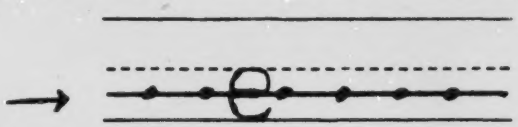
4. In some cases children hold their papers down with their left hand while writing with their right hand, and the left hand covers up the model letter.

5. The small "t" is a difficult letter regarding its starting height. Perhaps there should be an additional line within the guideline set between the top line and broken line:



6. The "W" both capital and lowercase, is a difficult letter regarding the stroke sequence. Perhaps instead of four separate stroke sequences, the "W" should be made with one continuous stroke sequence:

7. The small "e" is extremely difficult, especially regarding placement in the guidelines. Perhaps there should be an additional line within the guideline set between the broken line and the bottom line:



(Perhaps the Teacher Procedures should include instructions on where to start the small "t" and the small "e.")

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